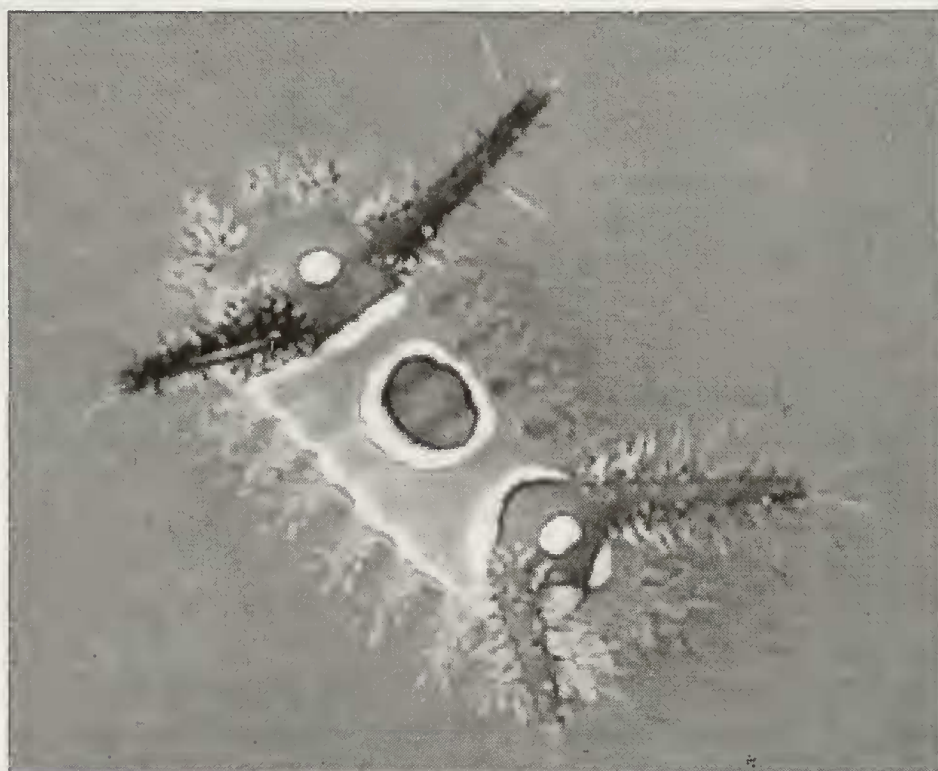


Saddleback Moth caterpillar *Sibine ?stimulea* (Clemens) (Lep.: Limacodidae): – a possible new record for the UK discovered in Somerset

On 29 January 2003, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery received an enquiry from someone working in a garden centre in Somerset (Vice-County 6, OS grid reference ST 35) requesting help in identifying a caterpillar which had “bitten” her. A digital image of larva in question was then received and after briefly consulting members of the Bristol & District Moth Group, who could not name it, the image was sent on to Warren Spencer, Head of Invertebrates, Bristol Zoological Gardens. He identified it as a Saddleback Moth caterpillar – *Sibine ?stimulea*.



If the identification is correct, this species is well known in America as a pest of many plant species and notorious for its urticating hairs which can produce a reaction similar to a bee sting. Assistance in searching the web for further identification clues by members of the Somerset Moth Group has suggested that there are other very similar species in the Americas and that identification can only be ascertained for certain by examination of the adult moth.

One larva has been preserved as a voucher within the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery natural history collections and the remaining eight live caterpillars are being reared at Bristol Zoo. The larvae were feeding on Areca Palm in the garden centre but have readily adapted to a new diet of bramble in captivity. The source of the palms has been traced to a nursery in Holland so far. I am not aware of any previous existing British records of this genus.

My thanks to Warren Spencer and to David Carter of the Natural History Museum for their help thus far.– SAMANTHA TREBILCOCK, Biology Section, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Queens Rd, Bristol, BS8 1RL (E-mail: sam_trebilcock@bristol-city.gov.uk).